

# 18 - 24 YEAR OLD SMOKING PREVALENCE

California Department of Health Services  
Tobacco Control Section  
<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco>

During the mid-to-late 1990's, smoking prevalence of 18-24 year olds increased dramatically. Two reasons have been cited for the rise during this time period: 1) a high percentage of youths entering this age group were established smokers and 2) an increase in uptake of smoking by young adults.<sup>1</sup> The 2005 data indicate a decrease in 18-24 year old smoking rates for the second year in a row in California, suggesting a downward trend. Young adulthood is typically a period of "volatility" when major life events can increase the 18-24 year olds' susceptibility to tobacco industry influences.<sup>2,3</sup> This "volatility," however, presents a unique opportunity to focus efforts on priming young adults to adopt positive healthy lifestyles.

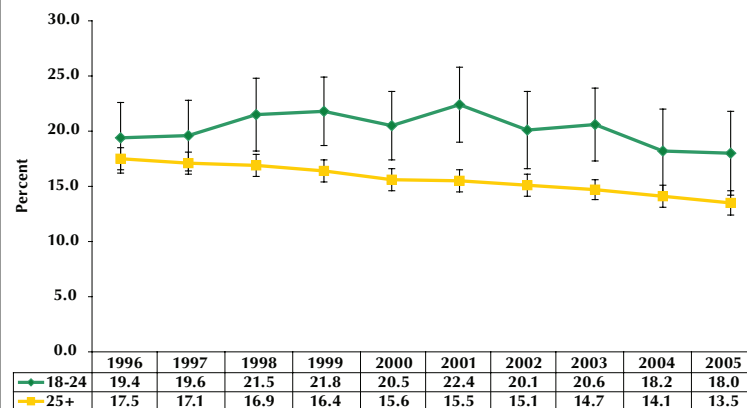
## Smoking Prevalence

- In 2005, the smoking prevalence decreased for the second year in a row to 18.0% with an almost 20 percent decline in 2001 from 22.4%.
- The 18-24 year old group continues to have the highest prevalence of any age group.
- As with all age groups, 18-24 year old men are more likely to smoke than women of the same age group.

## Smoking Prevalence by Gender

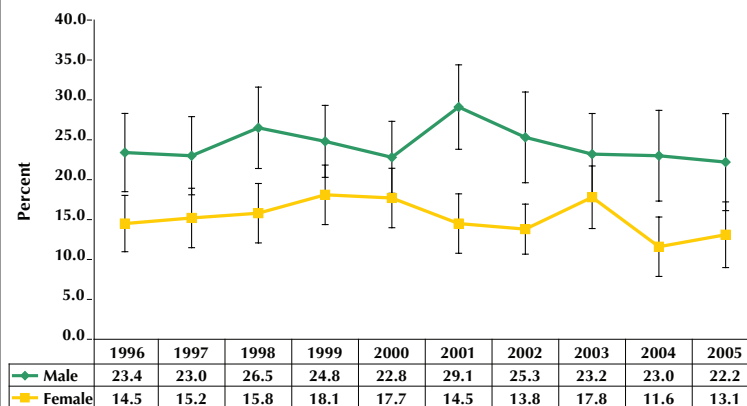
- Since 1996, the smoking prevalence of 18-24 year old men has been 24% to 50% higher than the rates for 18-24 year old women.
- The smoking prevalence for 18-24 year old men reached a high of 29.1% in 2001 and decreased 24% to a prevalence of 22.2% in 2005.
- 18-24 year old women reached their highest smoking prevalence at 18.1% in 1999 which has diminished by almost 28% to a prevalence of 13.1% in 2005.

**Smoking Prevalence among 18-24 and 25+ Age Groups in California, 1996-2005**



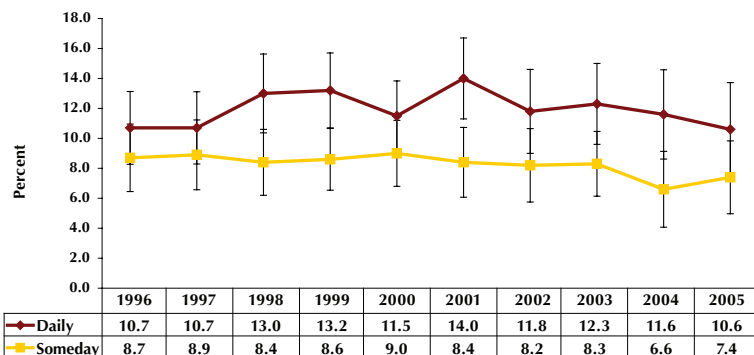
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and California Adult Tobacco Survey (CATS) data is combined for 1996-2006. The data is weighted to the 2000 California population. Note that error bars represent the 95% confidence limits. Prepared by the California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, April 2006.

**Smoking Prevalence Among 18-24 Year Age Group by Gender in California, 1996-2005**



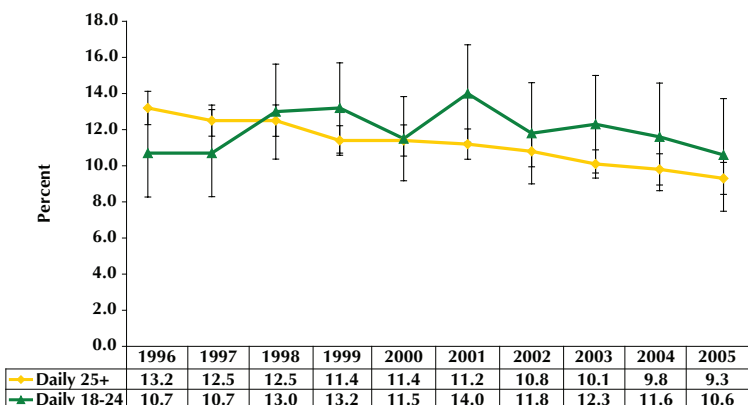
Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and California Adult Tobacco Survey (CATS) data is combined for 1996-2005. The data is weighted to the 2000 population. Note that error bars represent the 95% confidence limits. Prepared by California Department of Health Services, April 2006.

### Daily and Someday Smoking Prevalence Among the 18-24 Old Group in California, 1996-2005



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and California Adult Tobacco Survey (CATS) data is combined for 1996-2005. The data is weighted to the 2000 California population. Note that error bars represent 95% confidence limits. Prepared by: California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, April 2006.

### Daily Smoking Prevalence among 18-24 and 25+ Age Groups in California, 1996-2005



Source: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and California Adult Tobacco Survey (CATS) data is combined for 1996-2005. The data is weighted to the 2000 California population. Note that error bars represent the 95% confidence limits. Prepared by California Department of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, April 2006.

## Daily and Someday Smoking in the 18-24 Year Age Group

- The daily smoking rate continues to be greater than the someday smoking rate among the 18-24 year old age group.
- Between 1996 and 2003, the someday smoking rate was consistently between 8.2 and 9.0 percent, but dropped to 7.4% in 2005.

## Daily Smoking 18-24 and 25+

- Since 1998, the daily smoking prevalence for the 18-24 age group has been higher than the 25+ age group.
- The daily smoking prevalence for 18-24 age group has been as high as 20% greater than the 25+ age group (2001) but narrowed to about a 12% relative difference in 2005.
- After a steady increase between 1996 and 2001, the daily smoking rate among the 18-24 year old age group diminished to 10.6% in 2005, similar to the rate seen in 1996.
- Daily smoking rates among the 18-24 year old group steadily increased between 1996 and 2001 to a high of 14.0%, but decreased by 24% between 2001 and 2005.

## About the Surveys

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (1984-present) and The California Adult Tobacco Survey (1993-present) are random digit-dial telephone surveys of approximately 8,000 adults conducted annually, by the Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) Unit of the Cancer Surveillance Section of the CDHS. Data have been weighted to the 2000 California population using gender, 4 race and 2 age groups unless otherwise specified.

## References

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- Schofield, PE, Borland R, Hill DJ, Pattison PE, Hibbert ME. Instability in smoking patterns among school leavers in Victoria, Australia. Tob Control. 1998;7:1499-55.
- Gilpin EA; White MM, White VM, Distefan JM, Trinidad DR, James L, Lee L, Major J, Kealey S, Pierce JP. Tobacco Control Successes in California: A focus on Young People, Results from the California Tobacco Surveys, 1990-2002. La Jolla, CA: University of California, San Diego, 2004.

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